No wine has yet come, so if you want some bring some.

~~Th~~ Wednesday
July 25th
1928

As a matter of fact Sunday will suit me better than Monday — so come then — shall expect you to tea (or water)

Only I am sorry that you won't find your new bed here, or the new mat: your room is even more disintegrated than usual, & Nelly's away; so cooking is only ham & tongue, but there's the garden of course, all a'blowing: & the orchard to sit in — which you haven't got — not with pears & apples everywhere: & you haven't got a large yellow tin bath on the lawn, or a view, or a loving heart — come to

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think of it. For Promiscuous you are, & that's all there is to be said of you. Look in the Index to Orlando after Pippin & see what comes next — Promiscuity passim.

I am in roaring health & spirits after one day here & have sat looking at cows for 3 hours instead of charging round London buying scraps of meat. & coming home to find Clive, Miss Jenkins, Sibyl: &c. But Edith Sitwell is waving her hand — the loveliest in London — at me: says I'm the only person she wants to know. Now how to do you read "know": it has 2 senses.

But all that is shut off for 2 months.

And now I'm going to saunter down to the river with Pinker & Leonard will throw a stick in: Look here;

NYPL
HAMILL & BARKER 2/5/62

Monks House
Rodmell
30th Aug 1928

How do you live the life you do? Sixty people to dinner.
One for three days entirely dissipates my soul, & sends
it floating, like duckweed, down a dirty river. I am
very hot. I have been mowing the lawn. It looks now
like a calm sea through which several large ships
have passed leaving wakes behind them. Then
I ate two plums which make my hands ~~Stickl~~ Sticky.
For many days I have been so dissected by society
that writing has been only a dream — something another
woman did once. What has caused this irruption I
hardly know — largely your friend Radclyffe Hall (she is
now docked of her Miss owing to her proclivities)
They banned her book; & so Leonard & Morgan Forster
began to get up a protest, & soon we were telegraphing &
interviewing, collecting signatures — not yours, for
<u>your</u> proclivities are too well known. In the
midst of this, Morgan goes to see Radclyffe
in her tower in Kensington, with her love:
& Radclyffe scolds him like a fishwife, & says that she

wont have any letter written about the book unless it mentions the fact that it is a work of artistic merit — even genius. And no one has read the book; or can read it: & now we have to explain this to all the great signed names — Arnold Bennett & so on. So our ardour in the cause of freedom of speech gradually cools, & instead of offering to reprint the masterpiece, we are already beginning to wish it unwritten.

I am observing with interest the fluctuations of my own feelings about France. Leonard says he cant come. Like an angel he says but of course go with Vita. Then he somehow conveys without a word the fact of his intolerable loneliness without me. — upon which I give it all up; & then suddenly think, what an unwholesome sentimental state this is! I will go. And then visualise myself saying good bye to him & cant face it; & then visualise a rock in a valley with Vita in an Inn: & must go. So it goes on. Meanwhile Ethel Sands advises us to go to Auxerre, Vézelay, Autun, Semur, Saulieu (Hotel de la Poste has wonderful food) & we are to stay at least two nights with her — Nan. I think I must manage to come. But it will be the greatest proof of devotion! And Leonard may make it impossible — how you put up with

these vacillations? Anyhow I shall see you before anything need be done.

I am very happy & not very happy. Do you like these states of mind to take precedence of all else in letters? I am happy because its the loveliest August; Downs so brown & grey, & the meadows so — I forget what. On the other hand, I have to work all day — it seems — grinding out a few notes like those a blunt knife makes on a whetstone, at novels & novels. I read Proust, Henry James, Dostoevsky: my happiness is wedged like (but I am using too many metaphors) in between these granite blocks (& now that they are granite blocks I can compare my happiness to samphire, a small pink plant I picked as a child in Cornwall).

Why need you be so timid & pride-blown, both at once, over writing your novel? What does Donkey West mean about her ambition & failure? Why should you feel abhor prosy art, when you can please Jack Squire with poetry? (That's a nasty one)

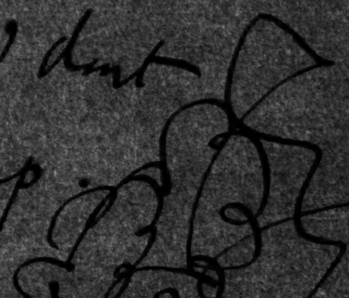
I am entirely of your opinion that Heaven has made us & not we ourselves. I accept no responsibility for anything I write or do. I like your fecundity. And, surely, for the last ten years almost, you have cut back & pruned & root dug — what is it one should do to fig trees? — with the result that you write sometimes too much like a race horse who has been trained till his tail is like a mouses tail & his ribs are like a raised map of the Alps. Please write your novel, & then you will enter into the unreal world, where Virginia lives — & poor woman, cant now live anywhere else.

I've not seen Dottie: but then I said very incautiously that I would like to buy some books off her, & that one mustnt say to a woman with ten thousand a year. For then she sighs to herself "Virginia only thinks of my possessions" Is this true of psychology?

At any rate its true that Pinker is breeding. She has at least six inside her, & the lice & a bad paw, all of which occupy our time incessantly. "Are you sure lice dont travel — is this a louse — what are nits —" such is our talk; & we had a play by Bobo Mayor, which made poor Lydia who acted in such despair that instead of spending the week end with Lloyd-George, she spent it with the Spinaches. We didnt clap loud enough: but then we were sitting in the rain.

Yes, I think I must come to France. I dont think Leonard will miss me one scrap.

V



Monks House
Rodmell.

Saturday
Sept 8th
1928

Concentrate your mind upon this, & give me your answer.
Suppose we start (you & I & Potto) on Saturday 22nd: sleep in Paris. Get to SAULIEU on Monday. ~~E~~ Spend 2 nights, spin like moths: go on to Auxerre, Semur, Vézelay; all within a stones throw: & get back here on Sunday 30th. Would that suit you? Brantôme seems too far. Shall I take you a ticket to Saulieu? Do you want to go 2nd or 1st (I insist on 1st on the boat) If first is much more comfortable, first is advisable — not otherwise; because first class travellers are always old fat [illegible] — & smell of eau de cologne, which makes me sick. As a guarantee of my good faith in coming, I went to a travellers agency & found out about trains & they will get us tickets, if given notice — So, as I began by saying — & Lord knows I hate this business of being so precise — let me know. I confess I am in a state of violent excitement already. You see, dearest Creature, being used to the brick & prime of health. I could sit up all night: we might go to moonlight ruins, cafés, dances, plays, junketings: converse for ever; sleep only while the moon covers herself for an instant with a thin ~~veil~~ veil; & by day traipse the vineyards. I am burnt chocolate brown. The sun blazes: but there — you are shuddering under quilts in a damned Teutonic fog. & I'll
But I have a thousand things today, & say no more.

as usual am in a flying rush, Pinka having had four puppies yesterday so that I have to go & buy Lactol or something in Lewes. They are 2 male 2 female; & she is a model of all the maternal vices — absorbed, devoted, jealous, cowish. But I was going to say that I like your Tolstoy very much. I think it is your best criticism, so far as I've seen. And as I always take credit for your good writing, I'm pleased with myself. I think you have got nearer the old Sphinx than any of the other anniversarists — who abound, — but blither. The problem you should have pressed home — had there been room — is precisely the one you raise, what made his realism which might have been photographic, not at all; but on the contrary, moving & exciting & all the rest of it. Some dodge there must have been; some very queer arrangement — I don't know what — of perspective. But I like you when you write such interesting things — & I have a great deal to say — if only the puppies could be fed without my going to Lewes — about your novel. I thought out, indeed, a long & it seemed then very profound essay upon writing novels, & how one can know if they are only foam or flesh or not, on the downs the other evening. I can't remember it now. I believe that the main thing in beginning a novel is to feel, not that you can write it, but that it exists on the far side of a gulf, which words can't cross: that it's to be pulled through only in a breathless anguish. Now when I sit down to an article, I have a net of words which will come down on the idea certainly in an hour or so. But a novel, as I say, to be good should seem, before one writes it, something unwriteable: but only visible: so that for nine months one lives in despair, & only when one has forgotten what one meant, does the book seem tolerable. I assure you, all my novels were first rate before they were written. If I felt I could write them

~~Ear~~ Early (forgive the hole in this paper — its torn from the handcuff book) then I should know they were plausible & ephemeral — as indeed Mr Swinnerton says they are.

As for Radclyffe Hall, I agree: but what is one to do? She drew up a letter of her own, protesting her innocence & decency, which she asked us to sign, & would have no other sent out. So nothing could be done, except indeed one rather comic little letter written by Morgan Forster, which he asked me to sign: & now it appears that I, the mouthpiece of Sapphism, write letters from the Reform Club! Nothing else can be done, except that Desmond is writing an article — but, as Dottie says, whats the use of Desmond writing an article?

We saw [redacted] yesterday, & she must sprinkle herself with some anti-aphrodisiac powder which gets into the male nostrils, for never have I seen Leonard in such a rage — yet she was much as usual to me: nothing in particular, running about her rocks. We drove home at 40 miles an hour — he was so furious with her vanity, conceit, egotism, vulgarity, ill breeding, violent temper &c.

Now I must go.

But write please dearest: & encourage me to come with you; which is a venture; for suppose you're bored?

52
Tavistock Square,
W.C.1
Telephone : Museum 2621.

Sunday

Dear Mrs N.

I have written for two first class tickets and cabin on boat for ~~Sunday~~ Monday sept. 24th. Tickets to Saulieu via Paris. I am also writing to the Hotel recommended by Ethel at Saulieu to keep us two rooms for two nights.

Why dont you sleep here on Sunday night and leave your car in our stable? This would be much better, as if you dont, I may be unable to get off.
As it is, what clothes do you e pect me to take? None, I hope. A fur Coat ?
~~[illegible]~~

I cant come up on Monday I'm afraid — shall be up on Friday; but if there is anything to settle, I can telephone; only let me know when I could find you.

Isnt England nice compared with Germany? Look at my downs: Even your wealds.

Pinka & puppies very well.

You could choose yours if you came here.

I am melancholy & elated in turn.

You see, I would not have married Leonard had I not preferred living with him to saying good bye to him. But at the same time, the Romance & ruins in

Auxerre excite my interest. Also the stained glass.

(This is what I call my pen)

& I'm very hurried.

going to a birthday party

with Potto

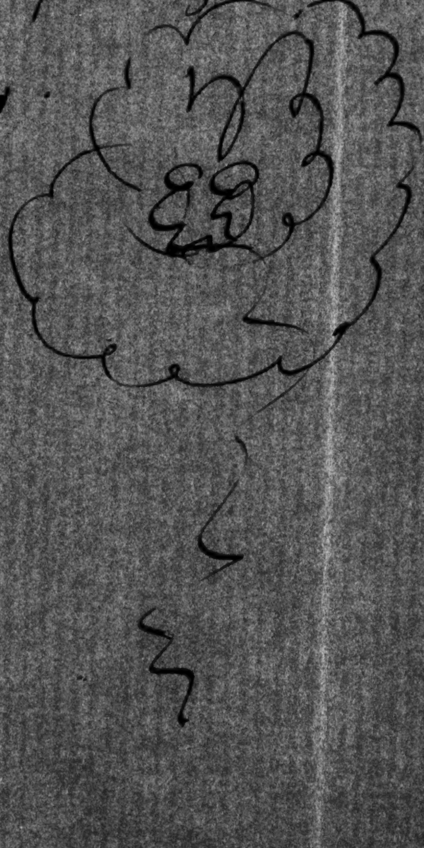
at

Charleston

&

cursing Desmond — NYPL NYPL Oh there's a lot to talk to you about: Orlando: Radclyffe Hall: me.

I am getting a fish basket for Potto.



Shall you be bored with me?

As an experiment, this journey interests me enormously.

Monks House

*Orlando published Oct 11, 1928

The Arch-Duchess Harriet

This seems to be the only piece of notepaper left in the house. Very angry & sorry that Eddy should see you — & not I. But will come for day or night any time before you go — if you'd like it. Only communicate your will. But I expect life is too horribly crowded. I think there's a chance of a week in France.

V.

And let me have your address so that I may write long impassioned letters: because 11th Oct* sees the end of our romance.

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